(215)

UNITED
NATIONS

E

Economic and Social Council

Distr.
GENERAL

E/CN.4/Sub.2/1992/NGO/1
18 June 1992

Original: ENGLISH

COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS
Sub-Commission on Prevention of
Discrimination and Protection
of Minorities
Forty-fourth session
Item 5 (a) of the provisional agenda

ELIMINATION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

MEASURES TO COMBAT RACISM AND RACIAL DISCRIMINATION AND THE ROLE OF THE SUB-COMMISSION

Written statement submitted by the International League for the Rights and Liberation of Peoples, a non-governmental organization in consultative status (category II)

The Secretary-General has received the following communication which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1296 (XLIV).

[17 June 1992]

RACISM AND DISCRIMINATIONS: HUMAN RIGHTS CONCERNS

1. Throughout the world we are witnessing increasing manifestations of racism and discrimination which generally affect minorities, with the flagrant exception of South Africa, and among them the most underprivileged groups. We must realize that the so-called First World is not able to guarantee to all its citizens the full enjoyment of their human rights and fundamental freedoms. From Johannesburg to Los Angeles, from Paris to Tokyo, the colour of the skin, the religious beliefs, the fact of belonging to a certain caste are often insurmountable social stigmata.

GE.92-12631/4471H

South Africa

2. The South African regime of apartheid is officially dead; the results of the referendum of last 17 March are clear: the white minority massively voted in favour of President De Klerk's reforms aimed at giving full representation to coloured peoples.

3. The ethical importance and political consequences of this decision are undeniable, but the difficulties of the transition to a real democracy are evident too. Two main obstacles arise. As apartheid was not exclusively a means to ensure the economic predominance for the whites (of which, however, the Voortrekker monument is still a vivid symbol) but also an integral part of their social and cultural attitudes, it has given rise to socio-economic inequalities among the citizens. Moreover, the international legal instruments - such as the International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid and the 1989 General Assembly Declaration on Apartheid and its Destructive Consequences in Southern Africa - are still confronted with an internal repressive legislation which can jeopardize the current negotiations between the Nationalist Party and the African National Congress.

3. This is confirmed by the slow and difficult development of the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA), first held in Johannesburg on 20 and 21 December 1991. Its second session (May 1992) has not allowed its participants to reach an agreement on the most relevant aspect of the whole issue: the mathematical parameters of the constitutent majority, that is to say the percentage of votes necessary to pass the clauses submitted to the Constituent Assembly (called National Assembly) and whether it is bound to a power of external veto. The question is obviously so fundamental that in the absence of a large measure of agreement on it, the rest of the discussions becomes insignifiant, which would show that apartheid is now as strong as before.

Northern America

4. When on 29 April 1992 radios and televisions broadcast news of the release of four white policemen who had cruelly beaten Rodney King, a coloured man arrested for having exceeded the speed limit, rioting broke loose in Los Angeles, undoubtedly the most serious in recent American history, considering the number of the dead, the wounded and the arrests, as well as the economic and social damages it caused.

5. In 80 seconds of eloquent images we saw the illustration of a well-known but carefully concealed phenomenon: the police brutality of which members of minorities are the first victims. "An endemic brutality", concluded an independent commission of inquiry in its report. During the last years, the Los Angeles authorities failed to reform the police corps reputed as racist and violent, and the riots are here to testify that for many of the members of the black minority their hopes of progress towards social justice and full recognition are continuously frustrated.

6. The very serious rioting that wrecked central Los Angeles, repressed by the massive intervention of the army which deployed no less than 16,500 men in an area of some 300 square kilometers is the price the United States Government has to pay for abandoning the marginal areas of its cities with a complete disregard for the welfare of the people who live there, who rank among the most underprivileged and have no possibility of living elsewhere.

7. Proof of this generalized unrest is to be found in the fact that the Los Angeles incidents reverberated all over the country: in Atlanta, Las Vegas, Seattle, Pittsburgh, there were acts of violence in the streets with dozens of casualties and considerable damage to shops and cars. Similar incidents took place in Toronto (Canada) where, in the same period, a young coloured man, Raymond Lawrence (aged 22) was killed by a white policeman in the poorest section of the town.

Japan

8. Article 14 of the Japanese Constitution guarantees the elimination of all forms of discrimination and upholds equality for all under the law, but the social situation imposed on the Burakumins does no credit to its observance. Even though the 1969 Law on Special Measures for Buraku Improvement Projects affected some reforms, especially in the field of education, further steps must be accomplished to implement the process of elimination of current discrimination against Burakumins.

9. Marriage discrimination, personal background investigations, exclusion from certain employments and promotion opportunities, minimal health assistance are all symptoms that the Burakumins remain a caste which is kept apart.

10. Despite the growing international consideration enjoyed by Japan, we must not forget that it has not yet ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and has always maintained a large volume of trade with South Africa.

Europe

11. In Western Europe, discriminatory attitudes are generally assumed to be a reaction against the phenomenon of immigration from other continents and, at present, from Eastern Europe. These manifestations do not only derive from a mere difference in the colour of the skin; they are rooted in incorrect mental behaviour and a spreading cultural attitude of rejecting whatever is linked with different traditions, customs or religions.

12. This deplorable way of acting and feeling is supported by the new extreme right wing parties or movements which all over Europe are succeeding, with masked xenophobic proposals and through a false but inflammatory information campaign, in obtaining wider support and gaining seats in national parliaments.

13. The International League for the Rights and Liberation of Peoples is deeply concerned at the number of attempts made against fundamental human rights. Recalling article I of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights ("All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood."), it urges the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, as well as the international community, to take note that:

(a) The situation in South Africa is very precarious; that further positive steps must be made in the negotiations of CODESA and that apartheid still prevails in that country;

(b) The Los Angeles riots and their repercussions in Northern America demonstrate the grave social injustices and unfair treatment to which the black minority is constantly exposed;

(c) The discrimination against the Buraku peoples seriously hinders every possibility for their full development and recognition in Japanese society;

(d) The new manifestations of racism, xenophobia and religious discrimination in Europe are assuming alarming dimensions, negating the basic principles of democracy which are supposed to govern the countries of this part of the world.